

REMARKS

The applicant appreciates the Examiner's thorough examination of the application and requests reexamination and reconsideration of the application in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner rejects claims 1-27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,594,693 to *Borwanker* in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,978,292 to *Murakami et al.*

Although the cited references *Borwanker* and *Murakami et al.* are discussed separately below on the basis of the rejections in the Office Action, the applicant respectfully submits that the combination of these cited references does not teach the applicant's claimed invention.

U.S. PAT. NO. 6,594,695 to *BORWANKER*

Borwanker is only interested in, and teaches, a system and method for having an electronic online group conference among multiple clients over a computer network. See e.g. *Borwanker* column 3, lines 34-37. In particular, *Borwanker* teaches how to do so in real time without the need of a server and without having to post the conference messages to a network server first. See *Borwanker* column 3, lines 23-30 and 34-44.

Borwanker does not teach determining a purpose for each of the messages corresponding to one or more speech acts within a dialogue between two members which characterizes the content of the message. Also, *Borwanker* fails to teach or propose to analyze the patterns and purposes of messages between social network members, the dialogue status, and the dialogue outcome, to objectively characterize the quality of the social relationships

among members, in order that the social relationships and performance of the members can be optimized. This is in sharp contrast to the applicant's claimed invention.

The applicants' claimed invention characterizes the relationships in a social network, e.g. by use of pattern and purpose information to characterize the nature and quality of the relationships between network members, to objectively analyze communication patterns between and among individuals and groups, and thus target problem areas for improvement. See also the applicants' specification at page 2, line 16 through page 3, line 4. With this characterization information (uniquely determined with and by the applicants' claimed invention), improvements in communications and productivity between and among members of a social network can be achieved.

Specifically, and addition to other elements, the applicant's claim 1 (and independent claim 15, as amended) includes objectively characterizing the quality of social relationships between two members of a social network based on analysis of the pattern and purposes – corresponding to speech acts – of members' messages, the status of their dialogue, and the dialogue outcome, for optimizing the social relationships and performance of the members of the social network.

As one basis of rejection, the Final Office Action cites Fig. 4 of *Borwanker*. *Borwanker* describes an entity-relationship diagram, including an initiator, participants, a conversation, and possible sub-conversations. The applicant submits that *Borwanker*'s labeling of group participants relates only to, e.g. whether one is an initiator or participant with respect to the on-line group conference/conversation. *Borwanker* only teaches interactions, e.g. initiate, respond.

Borwanker fails to determine purpose of messages corresponding to one or more speech acts between two members. In fact, *Borwanker* states at column 6, lines 61-64 that:

In contrast to the one-to-one relationship discussed above for typical communication over the Internet, the relationship here is one-to-n, where n is the number of participants in a particular conversation.

Further, *Borwanker* fails to *objectively* characterize the *quality* of *social* relationships among members of a social network based on *analysis* of the *pattern* and *purposes* (as claimed) of members' messages, the *status* of their *dialogue*, and the *dialogue outcome*, for *optimizing the social relationships and performance* of the members of the social network.

As the basis of an additional rejection, the Final Office Action cites *Borwanker* at columns 11 and 12. The applicant submits that *Borwanker* teaches means for storing conversations by topic in order that they may provide a history to be retrieved. This is not unlike the prior art described by *Borwanker*, where messages were posted to a server and in order for a participant to be part of the conversation, and it is necessary to have some information about the conversation and participants (e.g. metainformation). In this connection, however, *Borwanker* simply teaches creating historical information, labeling (e.g. initiator, participant), filing, storing, and organization of files, housekeeping and cleanup of information. This is consistent with *Borwanker*'s narrow and limited teaching of how to effectuate online conversations in real time without a server. *Borwanker* does not teach objectively characterizing the quality of social relationships among members of a social network based on analysis of the pattern and purposes of members' messages, the status of their dialogue, and the dialogue outcome, for optimizing the social relationships and performance of the members of the social network.

The Examiner further takes the position that *Borwanker* teaches the purpose and pattern elements of the applicant's claimed invention. In support, the Examiner cites indications of message content and transfer or storage of all or part of a message (*Borwanker* columns 7 and 8), and/or whether a conversation is terminated, deleted and so forth (*Borwanker* columns 10 and 11).

The applicant respectfully disagrees that *Borwanker* teaches the purpose and pattern elements claimed by the applicant, at least for the reasons previously submitted by the applicant, or as amended. *Borwanker*'s teaching regarding content type as posited by the Examiner (citing columns 7 and 8 of *Borwanker*) are not purposes corresponding to one or more speech acts (as known in the art and as claimed specifically in applicant's dependent claim 7) which characterize the content of the messages. Moreover, *Borwanker* fails to teach an analysis of such information and analysis of the dialogue status and outcome to objectively characterize the quality of the members' social relationships (or to do so to optimize members' social relationships and performance).

In summary, *Borwanker* simply teaches a method for online members to become involved in a synchronized online conversation without a server.

It is clear, therefore, and would be clear to one skilled in the art, that (in sharp contrast to the applicant's claimed invention) *Borwanker* fails to teach determining a purpose for each of the messages corresponding to one or more speech acts within the dialogue between two members which characterize the content of the messages. *Borwanker* further fails to teach objectively characterizing quality of the social relationships among the members of the social network based on analysis of the pattern and purposes of the messages, the dialogue status, and

dialogue outcome, for optimizing the social relationships and performance of the members of the social network. See also e.g. the applicant's specification at page 2, lines 19-21 and page 3, lines 1-4 for support.

The goals and purposes, structure and functionality of *Borwanker* are fundamentally different than the applicants' claimed invention.

U.S. PAT. NO. 6,978,292 to MURAKAMI ET AL.

The secondary cited reference *Murakami et al.* also fails to teach the elements of applicant's independent claims 1 and 15 as amended, but the Examiner cites *Murakami et al.* for the proposition that *Murakami et al.* teaches updating dialogue status e.g. at column 9, line 51 – column 11, line 24.

In contrast to the applicant's claims, *Murakami et al.* fails to teach determining a status of the dialogue and updating the dialogue status as the dialogue progresses including determining an outcome of the dialogue.

Murakami et al. teaches deciding whether or not a word or topic is included virtually anywhere, including in a URL or in a shared virtual space/channel, and updating message volume accordingly. No dialogue outcome is determined by *Murakami et al.*

Additionally, the applicant submits that updating the number of hits on a URL or in a virtual space is clearly not updating the dialogue between the members as claimed by the applicant.

Finally, the Examiner takes the position that *Borwanker* and *Murakami et al.* are combinable because *Murakami et al.* enables a user to select virtual space (chat room) based on chat contents.

As noted above, *Borwanker* teaches a system and method for having an electronic online group conference among multiple clients over a computer network, and teaches how to do so in real time without the need of a server and without having to post the conference messages to a network server first. See e.g. *Borwanker* column 3, lines 23-30 and 34-44.

In stark contrast, *Murakami et al.* teaches a communication support system and method specifically designed for specific application servers, e.g. IRC servers and IRC clients. See e.g. *Murakami et al.* column 1, lines 15-25, and column 1, line 63 through column 2, line 18.

The applicant submits that it would not be obvious to one skilled in the art to combine *Bowanker* and *Murakami et al.* The teachings of *Bowanker* and *Murakami et al.* are diametrically opposite one another. The applicant submits that the opposing nature of their teachings is not overcome because *Murakami et al.* may enable a user to select virtual space (chat room) based on chat contents.

Accordingly, in contrast to the applicants' claimed invention, neither *Borwanker* nor *Murakami et al.*, nor their combination, teaches the applicants' claimed invention as claimed in independent claims 1 and 15. New claim 30 also includes the elements of claims 1 and 15, but characterizes social relationships for a number of pairs of network members.

THE APPLICANTS' DEPENDENT CLAIMS

The applicants' dependent claims 2-14 and 16-27 depend directly or indirectly from

independent claims 1 and 15, respectively, are thus are in condition for allowance for at least the reasons above. The applicant's dependent claims are in condition for allowance for additional reasons as well.

For example, the Examiner states that with respect to claims 10, 11, 13 and 14, *Borwanker* does not specifically disclose classifying the outcome for each of the messages as one of favorable, unfavorable, and neutral type. The Examiner states, however, that *Murakami et al.* discloses classifying the outcome for each of the messages as one of a favorable, unfavorable, and neutral type and assigning a score to each of the members of the social network participating in the dialogue. With respect to claims 12 and 25, the Examiner states that *Murakami et al.* teaches incrementing and decrementing a score assigned to a particular one of the participating members in response to favorable purposes associated with messages transmitted by that particular participating member.

Murakami et al. does not make any judgments regarding the findings, whether favorable, unfavorable or otherwise. *Murakami et al.* does not assign a score to members. *Murakami et al.* simply tallies a number (of topic or word "hits", as discussed above) and weights them to effectuate a more expedited search process.

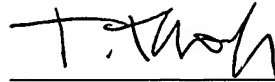
CONCLUSION

Accordingly, each of the applicants' claims 1-27 and 30 are in condition for allowance.

Each of the Examiner's rejections has been addressed or traversed. It is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

If for any reason this Response is found to be incomplete, or if at any time it appears that a telephone conference with counsel would help advance prosecution, please telephone the undersigned or his associates, collect in Waltham, Massachusetts at (781) 890-5678.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Thompson", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas E. Thompson, Jr.
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